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The Honorable Seth Moulton  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Moulton,

On behalf of the Commandant, this is in response to your letter dated March 19, 2020 regarding the United States Armed Forces plan to ensure continuity of operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate your interest in the well-being of Coast Guard members during this truly remarkable situation. Responses to your questions are provided below.

- How are you adjusting operations on the ground and in the fleet today in anticipation of the likely future spread of COVID-19?
  - The Coast Guard's priority is the safety of its members, their families, and the general public. The Coast Guard intends to continue operations required by law that provide for national security, protect life and property, and preserve the Marine Transportation System (MTS) to the fullest extent possible.

Domestically, operations and activities are being conducted to ensure the MTS, and the vital industries that enable the domestic supply chain, continue uninterrupted.

Prevention operations that safeguard the continued operation of the MTS are paramount. For marine inspections, the Coast Guard is accepting evidence of compliance with regulations such as video footage, photos, scanned log book entries and machinery alarm print outs to conduct virtual inspections on vessels that have a strong history of regulatory compliance.

Response Operations, such as Search and Rescue; Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security; Marine Environmental Response; Counter Drug; Migrant Interdiction; and Defense operations remain a high priority, but activity levels are scaled in some mission areas and geographical regions. Intelligence remains a high priority to inform operational decision making.

Abroad, the Coast Guard continues to conduct some operations, but is scaled based on host nation, Department of Defense (DoD) Combatant Commander, Chief of Mission guidance or other limiting factors.

Mission essential and time critical training continues to ensure sustained qualification and proficiency of the workforce, however efforts are scaled and delivery methods have been modified in the current environment.

- How will units in your Service operate when a service member in that unit has a confirmed COVID-19 infection?
  - The Coast Guard developed and released internally a *Quarantine and Isolation Guidance for Commanding Officers* to provide direction on how to care for members and ensure their unit's ability to continue conducting missions. The guidance, used in conjunction with the Coast Guard's COVID-19 Risk Assessment Flowchart, helps Commands determine which members should be quarantined or isolated and how to do that. All actions are taken in consultation with Coast Guard Medical Officers and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine the length of quarantine or isolation and return to duty status. The goal is to provide proper medical care to the individual, protect other members, and preserve unit readiness to conduct essential missions.

The Coast Guard enacted mitigating measures to avoid immediate impacts to operations and mission due to unit or cutter unavailability. In situations where an entire crew are required to quarantine or isolate other regional assets provide coverage as needed by changing their operational readiness status. This change in operational status could result in delayed response times due to longer transit times across expanded areas of responsibility. Impacts to future operations are anticipated as assets are exposed to COVID-19. In the long-term, as shore units and cutters extend operational and underway periods, critical maintenance will be missed that must be addressed at a later date, which could also have impacts to the Coast Guard's ability to execute its missions.

- How will DoD or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) -wide restrictions on travel affect training, readiness, and regular unit rotations?
  - Official travel within the United States is suspended for all Coast Guard members and dependents on orders, unless that travel is determined to be mission-essential, necessary for humanitarian reasons, or warranted due to extreme hardship. The Coast Guard is working to limit impacts to readiness during these restrictions.

Select DoD training facilities and Coast Guard training centers remain open to conduct time-sensitive, mission-essential training. All training which is not time-sensitive, nor mission essential has been canceled or postponed – or adjusted to remote learning venues, when possible.

For regular unit rotations, the Coast Guard intends to implement a modified Permanent Change of Station process that balances risk to mission with risk to our people, their families, and the communities we serve. The DoD has implemented a stop movement order, and the Coast Guard is heavily dependent upon DoD to process and ship household goods. Similar to the other military services, the Coast Guard may approve exceptions to this policy for mission-essential members to proceed with household goods shipment. The Coast Guard will continue to monitor unit rotations and adjust as necessary to meet changing conditions.

- Many training units are effectively already isolated, or relatively easy to quarantine for protection until graduation, but how will new classes be constituted in the midst of this pandemic?
  - The Coast Guard is implementing mitigating strategies, in close coordination with the CDC, DHS and the DoD, to ensure the Service's accession and training systems remain open to support mission-essential, time-sensitive activity. Close-contact training is essential to achieving required terminal performance objectives for many readiness activities and cannot be conducted in accordance with Federal, State, and local standards for COVID-19 social distancing measures.

Accordingly, the Coast Guard is implementing alternate training plans with mitigation measures prior to commencing mission-essential, time-sensitive training where close contact between instructors and/or students is unavoidable. Such mitigation measures include a 14-day Restriction of Movement, which enables training programs to meet CDC guidance for travelers returning from areas with sustained/widespread community transmission.

- How will the Reserve Components be leveraged to augment Active units, as well as support civilian efforts to combat the virus and supplement civilian hospital staff?
  - The Coast Guard Reserve Component will augment Active Duty units in a number of ways including: providing additional internal medical capacity at Coast Guard clinics; providing operational backfill as active duty members become ill; and sustaining incident management watches at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Reservists will also be used to meet interagency requests from the DoD and other Federal, State, and local governments. At this time there are no plans to utilize the Reserve Component to supplement civilian hospital staffs.

My House Liaison Office at (202) 225-4775 would be pleased to respond to any further questions you or your staff may have.

Sincerely,



M. Bert

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard

